



[C L R James, 1901 – 1989](#)

C L R James

[C L R James](#) was the author of “[The Black Jacobins](#)”, about the 1791 revolution that created what is regarded as the world’s first independent black republic, in Haiti. James also wrote about the game of [cricket](#), and the social consequences of cricket. He was a great writer, and a revolutionary writer.

James was also, often in his long life, a political actor, together with, among others, his fellow-Trinidadian [George Padmore](#) in the 1930s in London, then later with the Socialist Workers’ Party in the USA from 1938 to 1953, and then back in London and in his native Trinidad, West Indies. James died a famous and a well-respected man, although he had annoyed plenty of people along the way. But perhaps he was still under-appreciated as the great political intellectual that he was.

The attached and linked downloadable text given below is from C L R James's 1948 work on [G W F Hegel](#), called "Notes on Dialectics". It can serve in this series to show that the ability of the revolutionary writers to challenge the bourgeoisie at the frontier of philosophy is crucial, and that African revolutionaries have not been shy to do so, as difficult as this task may be.

James says in the second paragraph of this text that "The larger Logic is the most difficult book I know" (meaning the book that is more often referred to as Hegel's "Greater Logic").

[Lenin](#) wrote that "It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!" Naturally, this applies to Africans as well.

The last great hurdle of Marxist study is Marx's own master, Hegel. How well did James do in tackling it? [Raya Dunayevskaya](#), the former secretary to Leon Trotsky, [writing in 1972](#) when James was still very much alive, did not think much of his work on Hegel. She accused him of "skipping"!

But for us, as beginners, James is a great help with Hegel, and is maybe just what we need. He gives us a way in (and so does Andy Blunden with his "[Hegel by Hypertext](#)"). James himself gives an adequate answer to Dunayevskaya in the very text that we are using today: "I am not giving a summary of the

Logic. I am not expanding it as a doctrine. I am using it and showing how to begin to know it and use it.” This is what we want: an opening (in French: *ouverture*).

African revolutionary theory and practice cannot be separated from the world’s general revolutionary history, neither chronologically, nor geographically, nor in relative sophistication. Nor can it be said that one is derivative of the other. To say so, is to display ignorance. Because is precisely when the African revolutionary heritage is looked at, that this inseparability becomes apparent.

On MIA there is a **C L R James Archive** at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/index.htm>.

We have chosen, for the purposes of this section, to take a sample of C L R James on Hegel. But in terms of the African Revolutionary Writers Series as a whole we would equally benefit from the following items that are in the MIA James Archive:

- [**Black Power**, 1967](#)
- [**Reflections on Pan-Africanism**, 1973](#)
- [**Walter Rodney and the Question of Power**, 1981](#)

These articles are to a large extent reflections by James on the interplay of revolutionary literature with the mass political movements that changed the African political landscape in the 20th Century.

They can therefore be read as reinforcing, or contrasting with, the remarks of Eduardo Mondlane, Amilcar Cabral, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and soon to come, Walter Rodney, that we have used for this course. You may also take all of these articles as validating the editorial choices and comments that have been used in the construction of this course; or alternatively you may regard them as a good exposure of the inadequacies of this course.

Either way, it is the problematisation of all these overviews of the literature which can be educational, especially if problematisation is followed by face-to-face or e-mail dialogue and discussion.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [C L R James, The Hegelian Logic, 1948.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)